

ABSTRACT OF DISCLOSURE

5 Methods of and systems for illuminating objects using planar laser illumination beams
having substantially-planar spatial distribution characteristics that extend through the field of
view (FOV) of image formation and detection modules employed in such systems. Each planar
laser illumination beam is produced from a planar laser illumination beam array (PLIA)
comprising an plurality of planar laser illumination modules (PLIMs). Each PLIM comprises a
visible laser diode (VLD, a focusing lens, and a cylindrical optical element arranged therewith.
10 The individual planar laser illumination beam components produced from each PLIM are
optically combined to produce a composite substantially planar laser illumination beam having
substantially uniform power density characteristics over the entire spatial extend thereof and thus
the working range of the system. Preferably, each planar laser illumination beam component is
focused so that the minimum beam width thereof occurs at a point or plane which is the farthest
or maximum object distance at which the system is designed to acquire images, thereby
15 compensating for decreases in the power density of the incident planar laser illumination beam
due to the fact that the width of the planar laser illumination beam increases in length for
increasing object distances away from the imaging optics. By virtue of the present invention, it
is now possible to use both VLDs and high-speed CCD-type image detectors in conveyer, hand-
held and hold-under type scanning applications alike, enjoying the advantages and benefits that
20 each such technology has to offer, while avoiding the shortcomings and drawbacks hitherto
associated therewith.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY